

Indian Theraphosid Project



Project:

The only grant this year was from the Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund for Documenting the diversity, distribution and status of primitive spiders (Mygalomorph) in north-east India.

Surveys were conducted in Mizoram, Tripura, Nagaland, Manipur, West Bengal and Assam. High diversity of mygalomorphs was found in Mizoram and Tripura. Many interesting new records and new species have been recorded from these areas. Soon these species records will be published in international peer-reviewed journal.



We visited Sadiya in Assam, where incidence of spider bite had happened in May 2012 and found that it was very much the case of media hyped. Both the persons who died were not sure what had bitten as it was dark in the night and they suspected that it was a spider as they saw spider in the nearby area. And much of the story was created by media. Result of which, locals killed all the spiders in their neighborhood (approx.. 200 individuals) and when we went for the survey, we did not find a single spider. And this year there has been no report of these spiders from the village,

which means that most of the spider were killed and remaining are highly threatened. We tried to educate local people that these spiders are not fatal to human being and explained them tarantula behavior and mating season. In case they see tarantula in their house or nearby, they can collect it a jar and release it in nearby wooded area. But fear in the mind of local people have set in so much that it is necessary to carry out long term monitoring of these spiders as well as educating the locals in Sadiya and nearby areas.

Publications:

During the year 2012-2013, four papers were published on spiders and one is in press. List of papers is given below:

- Gupta, N., M. Ganeshkumar, S.K. Das and **M. Siliwal**. (2013). Three new species of *Idiops* Perty, 1833 (Araneae: Idiopidae) from India. *Zootaxa* 3635(3):237-250.
- Gupta, N. and M. Siliwal (2013). A Checklist of Spiders (Arachnida: Araneae) of Wildlife Institute of India Campus, Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India. *Indian Journal of Arachnology* 1(2): 73-91.
- Siliwal, M. N. Gupta and R. Raven. (2012). A new genus of the family Theraphosidae (Araneae: Mygalomorphae) with description of three new species from the Western Ghats of Karnataka, India. *Journal of Threatened Taxa* 4(14): 3233-3254.
- Kananbala, A., K. Manoj, M. Bhubaneshwari, A.Binarani and M. Siliwal (2012). The first report *Latrodectus elegans* (Araneae: Theridiidae) from India. *Journal of Threatened Taxa*. 4(7):2718-2722.

Outreach Activity:

- Helping CEPF Project 'Developing the need based Environmental Educational material for Uttara Kannada' of Dr. B.S. Somashekar, Green India Trust in developing education material on spiders of Uttara Kannada in vernacular language.

Conferences:

- Received the travel grant from Peter Jaeger, Senckenberg Forschungsintitut Und Naturmuseum, Frankfurt to participate and present a paper in Symposium on "Spiders of the Greater Mekong Region" held in Pakse, Champasak, Laos from 12th to 15th November 2012. Presented paper entitled "Mygalomorphs of India: An Overview".



Invited talks:

- Conducted a day workshop on '**Identification techniques of spiders**' in the Young Ecological Talk and Interact (YETI) at Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun, India from 5-7 December 2012.
- Given plenary talks on '**Spider taxonomy - Basics**' and '**How to write taxonomy paper**' in a National Symposium cum Workshop on Spider with special reference to agroecosystem at Department of Zoology, S.G.B. Amravati University, Amravati, Maharashtra, India from 1-4 December 2012.



Future plan of action:

- Identification of mygalomorph spiders collected from northeast India will be carried out and information will be published in peer-reviewed journals.
- A final report will be submitted to the Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund on completion of the project.
- Reports will be also submitted to various forest departments in the northeast India from which we had got permission to carry out the surveys.
- Proposals for generating funds will be written and submitted to different funding agencies in India and abroad.